

4
Hanging no Dishonour.

~~1747~~ BEING A *April-10-*
MODEST ATTEMPT

TO PROVE

That such PERSONS as have the Honour to
make their EXIT at the Tripple-Tree are not
always the greatest VILLAINS in the Nation,

IN A

LETTER

FROM

GENTLEMAN HARRY,

Now under Sentence of Death in *Newgate.*

ADDRESS'D

TO VILLAINS of all Denominations

IN

GREAT BRITAIN.

L O N D O N :

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Placing the Disposition
April 19 -



1771



Hanging no Dishonour.

IN A

LETTER, &c.

My Lords and Gentlemen,

THE Word Villain, which the ill-natur'd Part of Mankind have applied to our Fraternity for some Centuries past, as a Term of Reproach, if duly consider'd, has nothing in it so shocking, as one would at first Sight imagine. The Word was at first used as a Law Term, signifying a peculiar fewdal Tenure then in use in the Island, when the Civil Law governed our Courts of Justice; it was indeed the lowest Kind of Tenure, and sub-
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jected the Vassal to very servile Offices ; but still it imply'd no Crime, more than the Word Knave, which in our antient Dialect, signified only a Servant, as we may learn very plainly from some old Copies of the New Testament, where the Apostle *Paul* styles himself a Knave of *Jesus Christ*. At what Time the Words *Villain* and *Knave* came to change their natural Signification, or upon what Occasion the People of this Island took it into their Heads to be frighten'd at the bare Sound of these Words, and apply them to such Objects as they meant to express the greatest Detestation of, I am entirely at a Loss to find out ; but so it is, that these two Epithets are fallen into such Disrepute, especially among the Vulgar, that every Cocker finds his Choler boil over so soon as they are tack'd to his Name.

The Meaning of Words are certainly very arbitrary, and the Publick, no doubt, has a Right to impose what Sense they please upon them : This I do not complain of, I am satisfy'd they should change the Signification of Sounds and Phrases as often as they please ; but I complain, that when they have fix'd the Sense of certain Epithets, that they do not apply them uniformly, but confound them without Regard to Degrees, or Circumstances of Cases. Thus the Word *Villain*, at this Day, signifies the most abandon'd Wretch in Nature, a Creature without Faith or Honesty, bound by no Laws, an Enemy to the

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Common-wealth, and a Nuisance to Society. Now, I am not at all disgusted, that they should apply the Term in that Sense to such as merit the high Title ; but, as the Devil would have it, they observe no Rules in the Application of the Word ; for a Villain is often applied to a little petty Rascal that picks a Pocket, robs a Hen-roost, or, at most, gathers small Contributions on the Highway.

This Practice, my Lords and Gentlemen, is a gross Affront upon our Worshipful Fraternity ; to rank such petty Fellows in Company with such eminent Personages as merit the high Title of Villain, is an unpardonable Error in Speech : Nay, the Vulgar go the Length, to set it down as an infallible Maxim, that every Person that dies Dancing is entitled to be enroll'd of the Honourable Corporation of Villains. But I think it my Duty, though but a younger Brother of the Order, to endeavour to convince the Publick, that they do your Society a great deal of Injustice, to suppose that the Momentary Tenants of Tyburn, have arrived to any such Degrees of Wickedness, as to merit the Epithet of Villain ; at least in such an extensive Sense as it belongs to our Tribe, that frequent the most polite Parts of this Metropolis.

For my Part, I once imagin'd I might live to merit the pompous Title, with some of its lucrative Perquisites ; but, unhappily for me, I took a wrong Method. I set out on a wrong Scent at first ; I was led away with the vul-

gar Notion, that to pick Pockets, cheat, and rob on the Highway, was the high Road to gain the Title of an accomplish'd Villain; but Experience has since taught me, these were only the Steps to *Tyburn*, but far from being Qualifications that rank'd me of that illustrious Society.

I went on in this Error for Years; and as I had gained some low Reputation among the Crew of ragged Rascals I kept Company with, I conceited myself the Prince of Villains, and that my Name should be immortal among the chief of *British* Worthies; but since my last Misfortune of being seiz'd, I have fallen into quite a different Way of Thinking with respect to myself: Upon serious Recollection, I find I'm but a Novice in Iniquity, a meer Pretender to Villainy, and that if Villains only were to be hang'd, I have no more Title to a Rope than I have to a Ribbon, and might obtain the one as soon as the other, if meritorious Villainy was to be a Qualification.

As soon as our pious Ordinary had read me the common Lesson for Persons in my Circumstances, I was for some Hours in a very desponding Way with Regard to the State of my Soul; but as I am not of a Temper much addicted to Melancholy, I began to cast about in my own Mind, for some Subject that would give me some Hopes of Comfort. On this Occasion, it was very natural for me to examine my past Life and Conversation, to
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find if there was any Room for Hope from Repentance. When I had laid the Black List before me, I began to sum up the Account, and examine the Degrees of Wickedness I had been guilty of ; this led me to compare my Actions with those of other Men who were not under the same dreadful Sentence that I am. This afforded me some Glimpse of Satisfaction, for it is always a Relief to the Unhappy, to find that they are not alone. I found myself indeed single, as to the temporal Punishment of this World, and was a little shagreen'd at the Partiality of Human Laws, that seem to be calculated for punishing the Petty Rogue, and rewarding the Arch Villain ; but with Regard to Futurity, I was convinced, upon a thorough Examination, that I am in a much better State than many eminent Villains, whose Stations screen them from the Gallows.

Upon this comparative Examination of my past Conduct, the first Object that occurred to me was, a Set of Royal Villains ; I recollected the Transactions of most deceased Potentates, and found that I was but a Puny Villain, when compared with some of the *Richards* of *England*, and some of the *Lewis's* of *France* ; when I consider'd the dreadful Devastations some of these Purpled Rogues have made in the World, the Murders, Robberies, Rapes, Perjuries, and the monstrous Catalogue of deadly Sins most of them were answerable for, I bless'd myself that I was
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not a King, that I was not so wicked as many of them have been, who have received from their Pension'd-Flatterers the Name of Saint, Glorious, Pious, and Immortal, with many other pompous Epithets, which Humanity should blush to bestow.

I am call'd a Highwayman, a Robber, and a Villain, because I take a Trifle from a Passenger; but these purpled Robbers are called Kings, though they rob whole Kingdoms, instead of Hen-roosts, plunder whole Cities and Provinces, and murder Millions in cold Blood; had they been in my Case, they would have done the same Thing I have done; their Love of Justice, could not restrain them from any of these Crimes with which I am charged; but they happen to be placed in a more exalted Sphere, are capable of doing more Mischief, and, back'd with Power, can constitute that Action just, glorious, and equitable in themselves, which in me is Villainy, and attended with Punishment and Infamy. But Power cannot alter the Nature of Things, the Principles of Right and Wrong are eternally the same, by whatever Terms we express them, and that All seeing Eye, before whom all Distinction of Persons vanish, will one Day give the Villain to whom it belongs.

But, to pass from Kings, I view'd the Statesman in all his Pomp of Power, and could fancy I could discern Villain writ in legible Characters. I could discover him cheating his Master, administering to his Passions

sions to preserve his Place, robbing him of the Affections of his People, by pursuing Measures diametrically opposite to their Interest; I see him prostituting National Honour, Publick Faith, and the Birthright of the People, for a Bribe; I see him poisoning the Morals of the Nation, and corrupting their Representatives; Corruption, Bribery and barefac'd Perjury, are his Bosom Friends; and yet he prides himself in being honest; he would start at the Name of Villain, and be ashamed to be thought so great a Rogue as *Gentleman Harry*. But, I thank God, I am not Prime Minister to the King of *France*, that I have not so much to answer for, such a dreadful Weight upon my Conscience to disturb my last Moments. I have been a Sinner, it's true, but the Mischief I have done, has been confined to some Dozen or two of People whom I have injur'd; but the Ministerial Villain extends his Roguery over a whole Nation. Millions starve by his Oppression, whole Provinces are beggar'd by his Tricks, and Generations yet unborn may curse his Existence.

The Pension'd Senator, who swears to do Justice to his Country, yet sells his venal Vote for a Bribe, and barter's National Liberty for a poultry Place; or some dignified Monasyllable struts in his ill-merited Ribbon, and affects to be called a Man of Honour, is still more a Knave than I. I have been perjured, it's true, but the Effect of my Perjury
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was prevented ; and if it had taken Place, but few would have suffer'd ; but the perjur'd Senator ruins the whole Kingdom, and beggars latest Posterity ; he establishes Iniquity by a Law, and inverts the Order of Things ; he betrays natural Justice, and prostitutes the Honour of his Country, and makes Sale of its Liberty. I am hang'd because I cheated but a little ; but he who gets Thousands by the blackest Treachery, usurps the sacred Epithet of Honesty, and claims Honour as his Inheritance ; how calm must my last Moments be in Comparison of his, if his Conscience has not lost all Sense of Feeling, or his Soul void of all its rational Faculties ?

The pretended Patriot, who declares in the Senate for the Liberty of his Country, is zealous in its Defence, and sanguine in his Opposition to every Measure that has the least Tendency to oppress, enslave, or drain the People, would make the Publick believe, that he has monopoliz'd all the Honesty in the Nation, hates Villainy as he does the Devil, or the Prime Minister, and Watches Night and Day, from no other Motive, but the Publick Good ; yet, in his Heart, pants only after Power. Place, or a Title, and is ready, on the first Occasion that the Minister comes up to his Price, to read his Prayers backward, and give the Lye to every Patriot Doctrine he had before inculcated with such Zeal and Industry ; he is then as zealous for every Court Measure, as he was before active in his Opposition ; and
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still with the same Pretence to Honesty : But when he comes to be as near Death as I am, when the Clouds of Ambition are dissipated, the Film of Self-Love, Avarice, and Pride taken from his Eyes, he must conclude that I am a Saint to him : If I robb'd the Publick, I did it openly and risk'd my Life for every Trifle I become Master of, but he has robb'd the Publick, under the sacred Pretence of Friendship, and cheated under the most solemn Trust. I robb'd private Persons, but he robb'd the State, and made Sale of his venal Voice to enslave future Generations : Under the Pretence of Zeal for the People he made them his Dupes, till he had enhanced the Price of his Villainy ; and when he could raise his Market no higher, he cheats both King and People : I thank God I am no Modern Patriot, and have not so many Sins to answer, so many Curses of the Fatherless and Widows to prey upon my departing Soul.

In my own Imagination I stray'd to *Westminster-Hall*, and peep'd into the Breasts of the Gentlemen of the long Robe, to try if I could discern any Thing there like myself ; the Outside indeed was fair, Justice, Law, and Equity, seem'd to occupy every Man's Heart, but upon a nearer View, I could discern nothing but Words, empty Sounds, and unnatural Distinctions ; they profess'd to protect the Innocent, to judge the Cause of the oppress'd, and to be the Stay of the Widow and Fatherless ; but in Reality Money was their

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only Motive; Men with square Caps, and those with no Caps at all, sold their Talents, their Rhetorick to the designing Knave, and rich Villain, without any Regard to Justice or Equity: I found rich Rogues had their Counsel, who endeavour'd to describe them and their Actions, in the most amiable Colours; while the honest Man if poor, was treated as the Scum of the Earth: In one End of the Court, I saw some Rogues punish'd, but what Sort were they? Only such as had not Money to purchase a Rope or to fee Counsel. In a Word, I found that the Word Villain in *Westminster-Hall* signified only a Fellow that was poor, and that Innocence always imply'd Riches: And here I learn'd that to be detected of Poverty was the only Crime; and that there was no Sin so heinous but might there find an Advocate to palliate it. In a Word, such a Scene of Villainy and Oppression discover'd itself in that Spot of Earth, that I bless'd myself, I was not born near it, nor bred a Member of the Black Profession.

From *Westminster-Hall* I transported myself to a convenient Situation, to view another Sort of Gentlemen in Black. I had not long contemplated the Inside of the Reverend Clergy, before I was fully convinced that it was not the Cap that made the Friar, and that nothing is more different from one another than the Inside and Outside of a Right Reverend. Sanctity of Manners, Humility, Patience, and Charity, they claim, as the distinguish-

guishing Badges of their Function ; but where are these to be found ? You may find a Needle in a Bottle of Hay with as much Ease, as discover them among the Generation of Cas-focks. They wear the Garb, the Symbol of these Virtues, but its only as I used to wear a Vizard when collecting on the Highway, to conceal my own natural Countenance ; for, strip them of their Canonicals, and you find underneath gross Immorality, Lust and Drunkenness, with a long Catalogue of deadly Sins ; Pride, Spiritual Pride, Avarice, and Dis-simulation, are almost the constant component Parts of a modern Priest. This Reflection brings to my Mind an Interview I had with a Clergyman some Years ago. I had been out upon the Pad, in a County not far distant from *London*, and, for several Days, had met with but very little Booty. My Misfortunes were such at that Time, that a little Money was absolutely necessary ; and, upon finding myself long disappointed of a Relief in the desperate Way I had undertaken, Shagreen, Vexation and Fatigue, threw me into a slight feverish Disorder. This obliged me to put up at a Publick House, not far-Distant from the Common where I was station'd. I had not been long here, when a Clergyman enter'd the House, and sat down in the same Box in the Kitchen where I sat. The Sight of a Parson, which, till that Time, always inspir'd me with awful Respect, brought to my Mind many melancholy Reflections. My Indisposition help'd to give Way to them, and I found

myself almost resolv'd to embosom myself to the Priest, in Hopes to find from him some Ease from the Torment of a guilty Conscience. For this Purpose, I enter'd into Conversation with the Parson, whom I found, to all outward Appearance, to be sedate in his Behaviour, modest in Conversation, and every way qualified to discharge the Duties of his Function with Conscience and Decency.

After some Chat upon indifferent Matters, I found Means to persuade the holy Man to go into a private Room. Here we call'd for Pipes, Tobacco, and a Bottle of Wine; and I was just casting about for an Opportunity to introduce my Case to the Doctor, when he moved for a Pack of Cards to pass away the Time. As we had hitherto been conversing of Matters pretty serious, this Overture gave me some Disgust in the Temper of Mind I then was in; and suggested to me, that I should make further Trial of the Temper of my *Levite*, before I trusted him too far. Cards were got, and we play'd at Cribbage for Sixpence. The Parson had not play'd above a Rubber or two, before I could discover, that he understood all the Tricks and Shufflings upon the Cards, as well as the most experienc'd Gambler of us all. I ply'd him with a Glass, and found him a Toper; and in an Hour or two's Time, I found, by the Priest, that he had as much need of Confession as I had; not, indeed, for Collecting, that he had not a large enough Share of natural Courage for; but every other Vice,

Vice, that does not merit the Gallows, he was possess'd of in a superlative Degree. Though the Parson understood Shuffling pretty well, yet I got the Better of him at Cribbage; and some other Games we play'd, till I got Master of his Watch and ready Money, both which just answer'd the particular Sum I then wanted. I treated my Priest with his Reckoning and a W——re, and returned to *London*, cured of my Qualm of Conscience, and my Veneration for Priesthood, without so much as attempting to rob on the Way, though I had many Oppottunities. Now, I desire to know, whether *Gentleman Harry*, or the Man in the Cassock, is the greatest Villain? That he is the greatest Hypocrite, I think is past Dispute; he would have cheated me at Cards if he could, therefore my cheating him was only Self-Defence; and I think according to the Opinion of Casuists no Crime; for they have an Adadge among them in my Favour, *falere fallentem non est Praus*, which I understood to signify, that to cheat the Cheater is no Fraud; I conclude, and I think fairly, that a Man who is capable of putting in Practice the low Tricks at Cards, would, if he had Courage, and was drove to Necessity take to the Highway; as for all other Vices, he was in no Degree inferior to me; therefore, if you add to his Account Hypocrisy, and the Mischief he does to Society by his Example, I may without Vanity assume to myself the Character of a much honestest Man than he, or any other in simular Circumstances. I am far from insinuating,
that

that all in Orders are like my Companion; by no Means; there are Gentlemen of the Cassock that are an Honour to their Profession, and of real Service to Society; but I would insinuate, that a profligate Clergyman, whether he obtain the Gallows or not, yet according to the strick Rules of Equity merits it more than a petty Fellow; and is often the Occasion of many a poor Wretches Ruin, by giving him a mean Opinion of Religion, and lessening the Influence it ought to have upon his Morals by his Example: For it is natural for the Ignorant, when they see the Parson or Curate of the Parish act as if he did not believe what he Preaches; to conclude, that Religion is all a Farce, a Trick of the Priests to blind the World and cheat them of Tithes. But enough of the Gentlemen in Black; let us try what Title the Gentlemen in Red have to Honour and Honesty, about which they make such a Rout.

The Colonel, boasts himself a Man of Honour, and would draw his Sword upon any Man who durst Charge him with Knave or Villain; he scorns to cheat any Man; and in his own Conceit is mighty honest. It is true he does not pick Pockets at the Play-house, or rob on *Kennington-Common*, he is no Shop-Lifter, and would not steal a Coat or a Shirt for the World; but the honest Man is not ashamed to make false Musters and cheat the Publick of the Pay of a Dozen or two of Men every Day he rises: He makes no Scruple of picking the Men's Pockets of their Cloathing,
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and pilfering from them all the Cloaths he wears in a Year, and some hundreds of Pounds besides, by conniving with Corporals and Sergeants, and a thousand little Tricks, which every Man learns so soon as he is dubb'd a Colonel: He is not ashamed to sell Commissions, the Property of honest senior Officers to some Money'd Scoundrel, who has no other Title to Courage or Honour, but two or three hundred Pounds, he has earn'd by pimping for some State Villain. Thus the Bread of the Publick is eat by Cowards, and the Honour of the Nation prostituted to, and the Security of the People trusted in the Hands of a Set of Miscreants that are a Scandal to the Sword, and a Reproach to the sacred Commission they wear; but these are Genteel Rogues; Esquire is added to their Name; and because they do not pick Handkerchiefs out of Gentlemen's Pockets, they disdain the Name of Villain; but when Death looks them in the Face, and strips Things of their borrowed Epithets, and shews them naked their Crimes as they really are, they must confess, that *Gentleman Harry* is but a Novice in Wickedness to one of them.

These I have hitherto mention'd are exalted-titled Villains, dignified Rogues, but the Scene of Iniquity is not confin'd to the Court End of the Town, it has spread itself over the whole Nation; all Ranks of Men are more or less tainted with Vice; and pursue the profitable Trade of Villainy, without the Danger of Hanging.

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The Victuallers of the Navy, the Commissaries of the Army put in for their Share of the Golden Fleece; Love and Practice the Thing; enjoy the Profits and mighty Emoluments of profitable Iniquity; but hate and detest the Name: Those who contract to furnish the Navy, take large Prices from the Government, but are not contented with reasonable living Profits; they make no Bones of poisoning the Sailors, and stowing our Ships of War with Provisions, fit to poison Dogs; by this Means thousands of our brave Tars die Yearly; yet these Fellows are not guilty of Murder or Robbery; not they, they scorn the Name, but if they escape Corporal Punishment here, by the Means of their Interest with yet more elivated Villains, there is a Time, when Court Interest cannot avail them, and they shall be try'd at a Bar, were killing is deem'd Murder, whether it is committed with a Poinard or rotten Beef and Bread, where Robbery is adjudged such, whether it is perpetrated by such as *Gentlemen Harry*, or by an honourable C——r of certain Boards. But I thank God I have no Murder to answer for directly or indirectly, no innocent Blood to stain my Soul with: The highest Crime I have to charge my Conscience with is Purjury, and even that admits of some Aleviation in my Circumstances; the Multiplicity of Oaths in this Country, has in a great Measure weaken'd the Obligation of an Oath among the Vulgar; and even the Law lays some Temptations in the Way of Men of less rigid Morals,

to make free with their Consciences on this Occasion: The Example of the Great is another strong Bias upon our Minds, to think less horribly of the Crime of Perjury. The Practice of bribing and corrupting in spite of all Oaths and Moral Obligations which we see daily, lessens the Horror of the Sin, and make us fancy that the Laws promulgate, and the Doctrines preach'd against that Crime, receive their Force not from the Nature of Things, but from the Circumstance and Character of Persons.

Cheating I have been guilty of; but if I am to be hang'd for Cheating only, and my Gallows as high as *Hammon's*, and that placed on the *Cupula* of *St. Paul's*, there is scarce an Object I could see from that Height, but in some Measure has profited more by the Trade than I; tho' I suffer the Punishment; Cheating is the Secret, the only Secret of getting Rich; Honesty, mere plain Honesty starves and goes a Begging in this Metropolis; Knavery tho' under a less odious Name goes an eternal Circle thro' all Trades and Professions; tho' none are hang'd for it but the little petty Rogue, or the Fool. The Gallows seems not so much calculated, for ridding the World of Knaves as of Fools; if a Fellow has Ingenuity enough to get an Estate by Cheating, he disclaims the Name of *Villain*; but if the Rogue is tatter'd, and cannot live by the Trade of legal Tricking he is certainly hang'd.

This leads me to apply all that I have said to the Purport of my Title Page; from whence its plain, that if Villainy is to be explain'd by the Degrees of Mischief it does the Society; the Poor Rogue that is Hang'd or Gibbitted is by many Degrees honefter than the Villain who struts in his Star. The Bishop who groans under a Mitre, or the Officer daub'd in Scarlet: For this Reason, my Lords and Gentlemen, I would have you promote a Law, that such Poor Fellows as are Hang'd may not be dignified with the Title of Villain; that belongs only to Men of your eminent Proficiency in Wickedness: Your Honour is concern'd to wipe off from your numerous Society, the Scandal of being thought such little Rogues as those that go to *Tyburn* in a Cart: For my Part, I once had the Ambition to be thought a notorious Villain; but after this Review, I am contented, now that I am going to die, to gain the Character of a little sneaking Sinner; and I confess myself by many Degrees Honefter than most of you; and therefore don't think, tho' I have the Honour to be Hang'd, that I incline to usurp the Name of Villain; no, I leave it to flourish with you and your Posterity; and I flatter myself that you'll put *Tyburn* out of Countenance, and convince the World, that being Hang'd is a greater Proof of a Man's Folly than Villainy.

